

Listen

A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction

J U L Y 2 0 1 5

V O L 9 : I S S U E 3

FIELD OF LOVE

The immensity of being present to ourselves brings spiritual awareness, insight, and provides the ability to participate in a field of love. This, ultimately, is the grounding source of all affirmative action and being. Living fully present in *this* place and time can create boundless interconnection.

I have a shoulder injury. "A tender wing," whispered my yoga instructor when she invited me to adapt and tuck my right arm close into my side, positioning my hand near my heart in order to complete a posture. In the embodied practice of yoga I encounter my edges, drifting mind, and kindness toward myself and others. Focused consistent breathing, meeting myself as I am, *now*, is critical. Barefoot on the yoga mat, perceptions float away, pure presence expands. Time flies even when my right wing weeps, tucked at my side, protected and sheltered. Unbounded kindness creates the path, meeting a longing to ultimately embrace myself, thus no longer unconsciously needing someone else to carry the weight of my unexamined life.

I met with my spiritual guide on a Monday, and we explored the topic of increasing shoulder pain. I was invited to let go of the old stories I attached to injury, and instead be present to the current time, which was the opportune time, to face an injury that had visited over many years, but



Superb lyrebird — *Menura novaehollandiae*

reached a crossroad. The invitation: become present to this experience in your body, not the old narratives. "What is asking to be met, here and now?" he invited.

Friday morning I met with a doctor. His bluntness attracted me. His confidence inspired trust. But I repelled his pronouncement: "Surgery. Or live with the pain and immobility." Seconds passed. "This immobility is not an option," I cried, looking him dead in the eyes, daring him to back down. He didn't. I left the appointment frustrated and angry. Decisions would need to be made. I fought terror and fear. "Breathe Pegge," I told myself. "This is a problem that can be solved."

Back at my workplace, attempting to concentrate, my emotions rollercoasted, stemming from the impact and analysis of major surgery, living alone, two dogs, responsibilities, and healing time. At 4:50 p.m., a young lady, sixteen years of age, appeared at

my office door, unannounced. Her twinkling eyes peeped from behind an extravagant bouquet of flowers. She smiled with love and delight at my utter surprise. She and her sister intuited my aloneness, fear, and disappointment after texting me to find out the results of my doctor appointment. "We love you," she said. "I will come and take care of you after your surgery. It will be fun and you will be stronger than before." Tears filled my eyes, welling from a deep cavern in my chest. I realize I am being met in a field of love by two young women. Can I meet myself in this same field?

I invite you to be courageous in your own life: please meet whatever is showing up. Share it with a spiritual companion. Be willing to greet vulnerability, aloneness, and beauty with kindness. Together we can let go of old narratives, be present to reality, and the mystery that emerges in a field of love. 🌿

—Pegge Erkeneff

SEEDS OF INTEREST:

- 🌱 Book Review: *Spirit, Soul, Body* by Cyprian Consiglio, OSB, Cam
- 🌱 Global Resources
- 🌱 Field Notes: A favorite landscape evokes...
- 🌱 Ask Owl

BOOK REVIEW

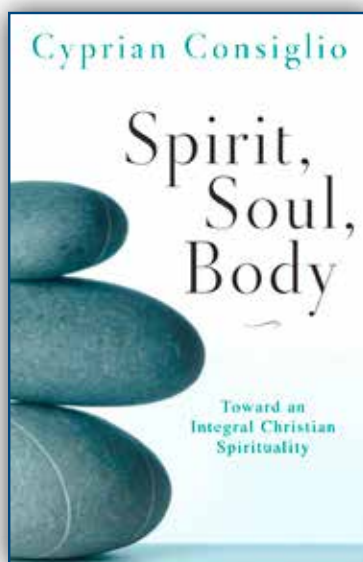
Spirit, Soul, Body: Toward an Integral Christian Spirituality

by Cyprian Consiglio, OSB, Cam

Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015

208 pages, CAD\$25.17, GBPE10.07, USD\$19.95

Cyprian Consiglio, OSB, Cam believes that, "...the law of praying is the law of believing. How we understand ourselves is going to affect how we approach God (or Ultimate Reality, if you will.) What we understand our goal and our end to be is going to affect how we live our lives" (1). Consiglio, a musician, monk, retreat leader, and composer, is a scholar of world religions deeply influenced by Father Bede Griffiths, a British born Benedictine monk who lived in ashrams in South India. Consiglio seeks integration and reverence for all aspects of being human: body, soul, and spirit. Offering an excellent philosophical framework in his new book, Consiglio explores the problems a dualistic understanding of the world creates through the broad concepts of the work of Sri Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950), an English-educated Indian from Calcutta, and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), a French Jesuit priest, paleontologist, theologian, and author. The chapters in Part 1, "The Problem of Dualism"; "Axial Consciousness and the Darshanas"; "Aurobindo, Teilhard, and the Second Axial Consciousness"; and "Incarnational Theology" sound dense. However, the text is concise, compelling, and thought-provoking, offering the reader a framework to respond to the question, *Who am I?* with a fundamental shift to trust the body and the human-divine relationship. Throughout Part 1, Consiglio seeks to help us understand two things: "First



is participatory consciousness—that is, being conscious of our participation, or participating consciously—in the divine nature. Second is the realization that the ultimate goal is not the ascent away from matter, earth, society, and the body, but about a descent in a deep consecratory way" (62).

Chapters in Part 2 offer a framework for "A New Asceticism" reverence for "Sister Earth, Our Mother" and invitation to "Awaken and Surrender!" Additional chapters, "Map of the Inscape, the Soul" and "Spirit: The Fine Point of the Soul" seek to respond to the hunger Consiglio experiences from people through his work and presence in the world. He writes, "I have found that people today are hungry for two things, and tend to look with envy at religious traditions that seem to have them. First, they (we!) are looking for a mystical path rather than a merely doctrinal one, a path that transforms rather than one that simply calls for conforming. Second, I also find that they (we!) are searching for a way to incorporate our bodies into the spiritual life as well as to establish a new right relationship with all material reality in general. These hungers usually manifest in searching for a practice (praxis), practical spiritual exercises. How often I have heard young people ask me concerning my spirituality, "What do you *do*?" or about someone else's tradition, "What is their practice?" (65). This new book presents a spirituality that honors every aspect of being human. It will be especially helpful for understanding Christianity, and perhaps bring a much different, inclusive perspective. Spiritual seekers and groups could choose to read and reflect together on the ideas Consiglio presents. Questions that erupt for the reader would be helpful to explore with a spiritual guide.

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Executive Director: Liz Budd Ellmann, MDiv
Editor: Pegge Erkeneff
Production Supervisor: Tobias Becker
Submissions: listen@sdiworld.org
Advertising: www.sdiworld.org

Listen is published four times a year (January, April, July, October). The names **Spiritual Directors International™**, **SDIWorld™**, and **SDI™** and its logo are trademarks of Spiritual Directors International, Inc., all rights reserved. Opinions and programs represented in this publication are of the authors and advertisers and may not represent the opinions of Spiritual Directors International, the Coordinating Council, or the editors.



W W W . S D I W O R L D . O R G

Listen is an outreach publication of Spiritual Directors International. When you visit the SDI website at www.sdiworld.org, you can learn about retreats, programs, conferences, and other educational events related to spiritual companionship. You can read descriptions of the spiritual direction relationship from a variety of spiritual traditions,

and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors*. More than 5,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at www.sdiworld.org.



FIELD NOTES

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE LANDSCAPE, PLACE, OR ACTIVITY FOR REJUVENATION AND SINKING INTO A DEEP SENSE OF PEACE AND STILLNESS?

Spiritual Directors International members respond

"There is a place in the forest about a thirty minute walk from my house. Two small streets and three brooks are in close proximity there. Each body of water has one or two rapids or small waterfalls within earshot of this one piece of earth. The larger stream creates the melody that the other three bodies of water join with their own unique harmonies. The fullness of the sounds is at a comfortable level of sounds, not overbearing. In that place, wrapped in the song of the Roark and waters, I experience the most basic elements of my ancestors, mineral and water, and my body and mind sort of reset. In those moments, my soul recalls the essence of the garden of creation."

—Bude Van Dyke

"There is a favorite chair of mine that has a heritage of having served on shipboard cruises to the Caribbean many years ago. It has a strap under the seat to secure it to the

deck in rough seas. A perfect way to keep safe and grounded, now as well as then..."

—Reverend James L. Gill

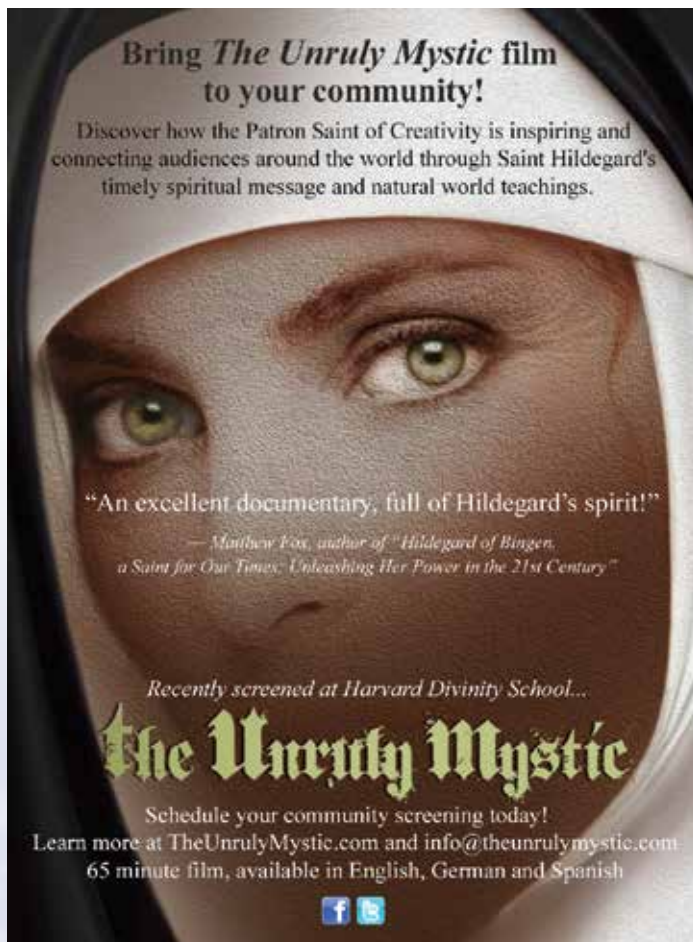
"Being at the beach and ocean. Watching the waves ebb and flow. Standing in this place, I feel hugged by God."

—Jean M. Lynch

"Here, in my own back yard, I put up my feet and clear my mind, able to savor what is beautiful and good. This little piece of earth's garden is in Arizona [USA] where we savor being its keepers. I see small rabbits, quail, and miniature lizards darting about. A rocky river bed awaits, and water rarely fills it. The patient waiting of this stream bed speaks: I, too, must wait."

—Chaplain Joy

"Sometimes I go cross-country skiing at night with friends



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FIELD NOTES, CONTINUED

in the front range west of Boulder, Colorado [USA]. We do not encounter other skiers; so there is deep quiet except for the whisper of our skis on the snow and our occasional conversation, perhaps reciting a poem. With snow on the ground, not a lot of light is needed to know where the obstacles lie, even without a headlamp. Contrary to what one might think, the one who sees best is the one who relies totally upon whatever light is given.” —Eben Carsey

“When preaching in different locations, I will often seek a grove of trees or a single tree, preferably as big as possible. This will be the place where many times a day I can breathe the Holy Spirit of God in the freshness of nature, in leaves open to wind and roots in the cool earth (I often preach in a very hot climate). Yet, there is a place inside of me much bigger than me, an immense awesome giant tree covered in moss connecting earth and sky. This inner place is visited in walks outside or in silent prayer. I let it expand until security, inner peace, receptivity and possibility inhabit me fully.” —Father Daniel Renaud, OMI

“Snorkeling and floating alone in Bonaire, Dutch Antilles blue waters, I gazed at my extended hands, and the sun rays, which were penetrating the sea, seemed to suffuse not only my hands, but my whole body. As I was rocked by our

ocean mother and transfixed by the sun’s energizing waves I sensed an awe and Oneness that blessed me with a deep grateful stillness.” —Dorothy Calvani

“I love the Maasai wilderness of Kenya. I’ve just built a small retreat center, including a valley prayer labyrinth, looking over the red soil and sage green brush of the Rift Valley. The only movement is from herds of goats or the scattering of gazelles.” —Christi Byerly

“I am a mother with three young boys, ages five, four, and two years old. Our household is very active, loud, and busy; so it is crucial for me to recover a deep sense of peace and stillness each week. My favorite way to cultivate stillness in my life is through a daily yoga practice. Most days, after I put my children to sleep for the night, I try to spend at least fifteen minutes practicing yoga. This time of peace and stillness enables me to parent better, and has had a profound impact on my physical and spiritual health.” —Lauren Carlson

“I find deep meditative peace from Mother Earth when I play a beautiful golf course. I particularly love the old style courses with lots of trees. This mysterious connection to serenity, healing, and awe has been with me since I was a child.” —Bob Gardenhire III

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"Are we not at every instant living the experience of a universe whose immensity, by the play of our senses and our reason, is gathered up more and more simply in each one of us? Are we not experiencing the first symptoms of an aggregation of a still higher order, the birth of some single center from the convergent beams of missions of centers dispersed over the surface of the thinking earth?"

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

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ASK OWL

Question: *Where is the best place to meet with a spiritual director?*

Hoot Hoot: Thank you for your good question! Place and location are so evocative. So too is timing! Spiritual guidance—deep listening—takes place all the time, and can happen anywhere. What landscape is evocative to you? Traditionally, many spiritual guides will meet in a location that is considered safe, sheltered, and consistent. Perhaps a candle, or other objects might be on an altar or table near comfortable seating. But equally valuable can be meeting in a park, at a coffee shop, on a deck, for a walk, or beneath a tree. Spiritual guidance happens face-to-face, via telephone (this is quite powerful), video conferencing, such as Skype, or even via letter writing. More predictable, structured, spiritual direction



happens in a regular ongoing relationship, which can build trust and accountability for spiritual growth, but it could be that you meet with someone once or twice, and will never see them again. This might transpire if you are on a retreat, find yourself in a conversion that suddenly goes deeper, or are engaging in service, community, or advocacy. The expansive nature of meeting someone in a

space of depth and self-awareness is shifting the traditional parameters of spiritual direction. What matters is that you feel safe and heard or listened to within a field of care, kindness, and love. The landscape of where this takes place lends itself to nuance, mutual preferences, and can be creative! 🦉

—If you have a question for Owl, please e-mail Listen@sdiworld.org.

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Spiritual Directors International publications are printed
by a Forest Stewardship Council certified press.



JULY 2015 VOL 9: ISSUE 3

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